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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [LG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: LATVIAN BORDER TREATY: DUMA RATIFICATION IN EARLY
SEPTEMBER AND BEYOND

REF: RIGA 647

¶1. (C) Summary. The State Duma will likely ratify the border treaty with Latvia, but the MFA and the Latvian Embassy raised concerns about the treaty's passage in the Federation Council, where political grandstanding in an election year could possibly result in further delay. FM Lavrov postponed his September 17 trip to Riga, preferring to wait until the border treaty passes through both legislative houses. End Summary.

Border Treaty Faces uphill Battle in Federation Council

¶2. (C) The GOR's ratification process requires approval by both lower and upper houses and a final presidential decree before the treaty can be implemented. The State Duma is scheduled to consider the border treaty with Latvia during its September 5 plenary session. MFA Second European Department Deputy Director Sergey Puchkov told us August 31 that the GOR expects the State Duma to approve it without much difficulty, but he was less certain about the Federation Council's vote on September 19. According to Latvian Embassy DCM Janis Zlamets, the United Russia party in the State Duma will push the ratification forward, but the Just Russia party, whose Party Chairman Sergey Mironov heads the Federation Council, may block it. He commented that Just Russia leader Mironov is unenthusiastic about the border treaty with Latvia and in an election year may choose to curry favor with nationalist voters by throwing an additional roadblock in the path of ratification. If Just Russia blocked the vote on September 19, the Federation Council's next opportunity to consider the treaty will be during its October 17 session.

Lavrov Visit Tied to Ratification of Border Treaty

¶3. (C) Both GOR officials and the Latvian Embassy underlined that FM Lavrov's September 17 visit to Latvia has been postponed, not canceled. MFA Latvia Desk officer Ekaterina Fyodorova affirmed that the Latvian border treaty is an important bilateral event to which Lavrov's visit would be timed. Admitting that the new dates hinge upon the Federation Council's decision, GOR officials hope that the visit will take place in October.

Comment

¶4. (C) The characteristic volatility in Russian-Baltic relations may be fueled by other minor irritants. The dispute over the "Russian March" organized by the ultra-nationalistic Russian minority in Latvia and scheduled for September 8 in Riga could affect the Federation Council's vote if it develops into a Tallin-like demonstration. Likewise, a new case before the European Court of Human Rights regarding an ethnic Russian's name spelling -- an

effort to have a latvianizing "s" removed from his "Russian"
name -- is another example of the emotionally charged
Russia-Baltic field.
Burns